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Abstract

This study employs narrative inquiry to explore the experiences of two female, first-generation immigrant- and refugee-background students from West Africa. Using interview as conversation for guiding open-ended research questions and Yosso's community cultural wealth (CCW) framework, we present participant narratives that speak to both similar and divergent experiences, which demonstrate a deep understanding of complex social issues presenting both tensions and opportunities for African immigrant and refugee student educational success in the United States. The study draws implications for rephrasing normative thinking about emerging multilingual students of African descent and developing a culturally responsive pedagogy for all students.

Keywords: narrative inquiry, language, multilingual learner, immigrant, refugee, identity, community cultural wealth

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Introduction

Africans comprise a significant proportion of growth of foreign-born population in the United States with many arriving as refugees or immigrants.[1] In 1980, just about 1% of all refugee arrivals were from Africa, compared with 37% in 2016 (Pew Research Center, 2017). Four of the Top 10 countries by refugee arrival in the United States in 2015 were from Africa: Eritrea, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, and Sudan (U.S. Department of Homeland Security [DHS], 2016). African-born population in the United States increased by 41% between 2000 and 2015. During the same period, immigrants and refugees accounted for about 37% of all Midwestern metro population growth (Paral, 2017).

Given the increasing numbers of foreign-born individuals from Africa who are settling in the Midwestern United States (U.S. DHS, 2016; Paral, 2017), more research is needed to better understand the experiences of immigrant- and refugee-background high school (IRBHS) students and to leverage the funds of knowledge and evidence-based strategies that such students bring with them to enhance their successes in school and their wider communities. Accordingly, this study examines the experiences of two African IRBHS students in the Midwest.

Although African-born children bring varying cultures, languages, dialects, and traditions to the United States, they are often assumed to be both homogeneous and of the same demographic as the larger Black race in American classrooms (Ghong, Saah, Larke, & Webb-Johnson, 2007; Kumah-Abiwu, 2019; Njue & Retish, 2010). Many IRBHS students find their linguistic competencies erased and experience linguistic struggles to assert their knowledge (Creese, 2010). Their translingual and transcultural competencies are not recognized, especially those competencies that do not align with normative school literacy. African-origin immigrant and refugee students often receive negative comments about their accent and different pronunciation of English words (Creese, 2010; Kumi-Yeboah, 2016).

1. There is a key legal difference between “refugee” and “immigrant.” In general, “refugee” refers to a person who has fled his or her country because of persecution or war (United Nations, 1951). On the contrary, any person who comes to live permanently in another country is regarded as an immigrant unless he or she is specifically fleeing persecution or war. Immigrants may be seeking better opportunities or joining relatives in a foreign country.

Cultural mismatch (Ghong et al., 2007; Kumi-Yeboah, 2016) has been described as a major discriminatory tool against Black immigrants. Ghong et al. (2007) describe cultural nuances related to being talkative and silent, where silence is construed as respect in many African communities. Lack of cultural understanding by educators (and student peers) about these behaviors may lead to misjudgment of African IRBHS students' abilities. Kumi-Yeboah (2016) found that African students experienced stereotypes by both teachers and students, which affected their academic performance and their ability to make friends. However, participants in Kumi-Yeboah's study disrupted the stereotypes using them as motivational factors for hard work. The participants leveraged these challenges and developed resilience skills—including problem- solving skills, self-determination, and critical consciousness—that enabled them to minimize their adverse effects.

Research (Covington-Ward, 2017; Harushimana & Awokoya, 2011; Smyth, 2013; Traoré, 2004) has documented effects of misinformation about (and negative portrayal of) Africa on immigrant and refugee-origin students from Africa. Covington-Ward demonstrated how one participant, Stanley's efforts to connect with African Americans were troubled by their lack of knowledge about Africa and the many stereotypes they had about the continent and its peoples. Traoré (2004) noted that African students are sometimes judged through preconceived notions about Africa and Africans, which influence what people say to and about them and shape how teachers and peers see them, often through a deficit lens. The result of this deficit perception of African students has been mixed. If education is the socialization of the young into the norms of the society (Oloo, 2012), school is often a key space where IRBHS students build, mold, and reinvent their identities and self-image, often in opposition to marginalization, othering, and exclusionary discourses (Obsiye & Cook, 2016). Multilingual African IRBHS students also do utilize their languages to maintain, nurture, or mediate their transnational networks, as well as to construct cultural identities and enhance academic literacies in their new schools (Oloo & Kiramba, 2019). However, as Watson and Knight-Manuel (2017) found, West African youth in the United States tended to downplay their identity as Africans owing to negative stereotypes.

These negative stereotypes and deficit perception of Africa has tended to influence most educational research on IRBHS students and families, focusing on students' cultural gaps and challenges rather

than their cultural assets and strengths (Shapiro & MacDonald, 2017; Wilkinson, Santoro, & Major, 2017). Wilkinson et al. (2017), for instance, highlight the increasing amount of research on cultural and academic adjustment problems and barriers encountered by IRBHS students who are portrayed as needy and traumatized. Such a focus deflects attention from an important yet "invisible level of socialization and capital building occurring outside formal educational settings which may contribute to some refugee youth's emerging achievements" (p. 211). Overshadowing the cultural assets and strengths of IRBHS students and their families, deficit models highlight student limitations and not any of their actual or unfolding potential (He, Bettez, & Levin, 2017; Ndemanu & Jordan, 2018; Shapiro & MacDonald, 2017). Framed as "baggage to be brought along or left behind" (Orellana, 2016, p. 5), IRBHS students are often not regarded for the most part as actors in their own rights, with their own agency or resourcefulness, but as people whose perspectives do not matter and from whom we could not learn to see in new ways (Orellana, 2016; Shapiro & MacDonald, 2017).

In contrast, a growing number of researchers have called for and conducted assets- and strengths-based IRBHS research (Bigelow, Vanek, King, & Abdi, 2017; Carter, 2007; S. Kim, 2018; Kumi-Yeboah & Smith, 2017). Tuck (2009) challenges "damage centered" research, which "intends to document peoples' pain and brokenness" (p. 409) while ignoring the broader, more robust reference to markers of strength and resilience. Njue and Retish (2010) posit that despite coming from highly diverse cultural, experiential, and linguistic backgrounds, many IRBHS students from Africa are often assumed to be homogeneous demographically or culturally identical with U.S. Black populations. In general, many studies show how stereotyping and ignorance of actual cultural practices across Africa blur or erase the distinctness of African IRBHS students and limit access to their linguistic and cultural assets (Covington-Ward, 2017; G. Creese, 2010; Ghong et al., 2007; Watson & Knight-Manuel, 2017).

Despite considerable research into the vital importance of home languages for acquiring additional language(s) and educational achievement in general (Kiramba, 2017b), honoring and building on the multilingual/multicultural practices of IRBHS students remains underutilized in American classrooms (Orellana, 2016). A disregard for home languages, for example, can have a negative impact on students'

relationships with teachers, parents, and peers, as well as their classroom participation, and patterns of linguistic adaptation (Kumi-Yeboah & Smith, 2017; Obsiye & Cook, 2016). Partly, this results from educator discomfort with, and a lack of training for using non-English language resources with IRBHS students (Bigelow et al., 2017), which may further impact teacher–student and teacher–parent interactions (Somé-Guiébré, 2016).

As well, the power of language itself—as a basis for thought and a social marker in the public discourse—highlights the central importance of language in the classroom (Bourdieu, 1991). Malsbary (2014) asserts that

> Language is a vehicle for power and discrimination . . . and the hierarchicalizing of ethnolinguistic groups [in the classroom] suggest[s] that youth learn and internalize ways of linguistically discriminating in their home countries, and that these learned moves may [be] reinvented and reproduced in their new contact zone. (p. 1330)

Highlighting the importance of culturally responsive approaches to education in diverse classrooms, Smyth (2013) writes that multilingual students should be able to "draw on their unique cultural capital as a learning resource" (p. 39). Roxas (2008) notes that while many IRBHS students may lack specific local cultural capital to navigate the schooling system in a new location, a mismatch between teacher expectations at school and IRBHS students' cultural capital often persists.

Although several studies have contributed significantly to our understanding of IRBHS students experiences in the United States, gaps still remain in terms of language and literacies, multilingual/multicultural perceptions, and dynamics around schooling of African IRBHS multilingual children. Thematically, this study advances sociological perspectives of urban education (Milner & Lomotey, 2014) by demonstrating how IRBHS students utilize their community cultural wealth (CCW) to navigate spaces in and out of school in the Midwest. We submit that there is value in drawing upon the rich backgrounds and affordances of diverse immigrant and refugee experiences. Through their stories, we learn about their perceptions of experiences and knowledge, dispositions and skills that could be useful to educators, policy makers, parents, and communities in welcoming such groups

of vulnerable youth in urban contexts. We aim to understand student's role in negotiating language, culture, and identity by exploring the following questions:

> **Research Question 1:** How do IRBHS students perceive treatment of their CCW in their daily lives as they navigate new contexts in U.S. classrooms?
>
> **Research Question 2:** How do such students view themselves and their cultural and linguistic competencies?
>
> **Research Question 3:** What forms of cultural wealth do such students draw from in their daily lives as they negotiate new spaces in and out of school?

Theoretical Framework: CCW

This study employs Yosso's (2005) CCW framework to unfold and understand experiences of two African IRBHS students in the Midwest. The study examines the linguistic and cultural capital of the participants and explores the assimilative and resistive practices in language, culture, as well as identity by these students as they challenge discourses that otherwise normalize underachievement by IRBHS students.

The CCW framework is built on the notion that marginalization not only silences and makes invisible marginalized people but it also covers over cultural assets and strengths not recognized by the dominant class (Bourdieu, 1991). As such, the CCW lens enables us to highlight these assets and strengths using six categories of social capital: aspirational, linguistic, familial, navigational, and resistance (Yosso, 2005). While these categories overlap and, thus, blur any hard-categorical distinctions, for this study, aspirational, linguistic, navigational, and resistant capital were especially relevant for understanding the experiences of the study participants as they navigated and resisted deficit ideologies, low expectations, and negative stereotyping about themselves and Africa.

Aspirational capital refers to the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future, even in the face of real and perceived barriers

(Yosso, 2005). Toward this aspirational end, *linguistic capital* encompasses intellectual and social skills attained through communicative experiences. For multilingual IRBHS students, this includes language interactions both in home languages and dialects in the new host setting. Integrally to this, *navigational capital* encompasses skills for maneuvering through social institutions. The importance of local dialect fluency cannot be overestimated because it affects student abilities (and the perceptions of their abilities) to navigate social institutions.

While translanguaging, which refers to use of multiple communicative resources to maximize meaning (García, 2009), is perhaps the most common linguistic/navigational skill of this type, aspirational capital comes into play as well, as IRBHS students often work hard to achieve positive educational outcomes. Navigational capital involves complex intersectionalities (Allen & Solórzano, 2000) and accounts for individual agency under institutional constraints (Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000). Relatedly, *resistant capital* recognizes the knowledge and skills fostered by behaviors that challenge inequality (directed toward the student or others) and promote social justice (cf., Freire, 1996). This form of CCW connects to the legacies of resistance to subordination seen in communities of color historically (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). CCW crucially allows reorienting different categories of capital in a student-centered way that positively highlights capacities otherwise negatively framed as deficits.

Methodology: Narrative Inquiry

This study uses narrative inquiry methodology to explore experiences of two IRBHS students in the Midwest. Clandinin and Rosiek (2007) describe narrative as an "approach to the study of human lives conceived as a way of honoring lived experience as a source of important knowledge and understanding" (p. 42). Narratives afford individuals the opportunity to make sense of their lived experiences through stories (Oloo, 2016). However, "Words themselves may not be sufficient, but the process, the story, is everything" (Fox, 2018, p. 2). This study utilizes stories as vehicle for telling and retelling and making sense of lived experiences of the two participants.

As Clandinin and Rosiek (2007) point out, "Stories people live and tell . . . are a result of the confluence of social influences on a person's

inner life, social influences on their environment, and their unique personal history" (p. 41). As such, participant stories are shaped by societal influence including sociocultural and historical situations where their experiences occurred and continue to unfold.

Connelly and Clandinin (2006) identified three commonplaces in the narrative inquiry space: temporality or the notion that human experience is in a continuous process of negotiation and change; sociality or the personal and social conditions, as well as relationship between researchers and participants that form the context for the participants' stories; and place or the physical location(s) from which stories emerge. The three narrative commonplaces of temporality, sociality, and place inform the research design of this study. We established an ethical and positive relationship with the participants that enabled us fruitful conversations about their experiences.

Setting and Participants

This study was conducted in a Midwestern city that could be described as urban emergent (Milner, 2012). The city has been receiving students of refugee and immigrant backgrounds from Africa and other regions over the years. The urban characteristic here is also demonstrated by increased linguistic and cultural diversity in the city and schools. We recruited the study participants through a teen ministry at a church with a largely African immigrant-origin families using purposeful and criteria-based sampling (J. Kim, 2015). Initially, we identified five potential participants. Two (Miriam and Haniah, pseudonyms) participated for the whole research period (see section "Narrative Accounts of the Participants" for details).

Data Collection

Following ethics approval by the first author's institution and consent from the participants and their parents, we used semi-structured interview as conversations (Oloo, 2016) guided by open-ended research questions to explore experiences of the two participants. We entered into the research relationship with the participants with the view of "tap(ping) into the tacit knowledge available to the insiders and to

learn from them rather than to study them" (Berger, 2016, p. 476). We engaged with each participant in three sessions of one-on-one dialogic conversations that lasted between 60 and 90 min at mutually agreed upon locations in the Midwest. We also conducted follow-up interviews face-to-face and by phone to clarify and expand on points in the participant stories. Data collection occurred between March and October 2018.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Transcription of the audio-taped interviews as conversations resulted in 26 pages of narrative data. This was overwhelming and resulted in a "Now what do I do?" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 172) moment. We then constructed narrative accounts of each study participant based on guidelines provided by Polkinghorne (1995). In conducting the narrative analysis, our aim was to construct narrative accounts which reflected participant experience relative to the three research questions that informed this study. We shared drafts of the narrative accounts with the two participants for their feedback. This led to revisions of the narrative accounts until the participants were satisfied that the accounts accurately represented who they were and were becoming (Clandinin, Lessard, & Caine, 2012).

There are variations in published narrative inquiry research with respect to data analysis procedures (Oloo & Kiramba, 2019). In this study, we employed paradigmatic analysis, which, according to Sharp, Bye, and Cusick (2018), is a common approach to data analysis in narrative inquiry. Paradigmatic analysis allows for the use of inductive conceptualizations to identify common themes from within the stories of the participants (J. Kim, 2015; Sharp et al., 2018). It also enabled us to utilize "deductive processes to explore how well data fits with predetermined concepts, usually those reflected in an existing theoretical framework" (Sharp et al., 2018, p. 9), namely Yosso's (2005) CCW lens.

Using cross-case analysis, we further identified and compared data excerpts representative of both participants' narratives individually and jointly (see below) and analyzed these in light of aspirational, linguistic, navigational, and resistant capital (Yosso, 2005).

Researchers' Positionality

We are Africans who came to North America as graduate students and have since completed our doctoral studies. Currently, we work at postsecondary institutions in North America. Outside our individual professional landscapes, we know a number of families with school-aged children who immigrated to North America from Africa. The idea for this study developed from our conversations with such families about their experiences as they settled in North America and negotiated their way through a new community and education system. Thus, we acknowledge our own bias as multilingual immigrants, students, and teacher educators who have crossed borders, with varied linguistic and cultural experiences. Shared background in our immigration journeys helped establish positive relationships with the participants, which provided a space for thick descriptions of their experiences. The participants were given gift cards in appreciation of their time.

Narrative Accounts of the Participants

Miriam's narrative account

Miriam is 15 years, in Grade 10, and the oldest of three siblings. Born in the Ivory Coast, Miriam moved with her family to Ghana at the age of 2 and then to the Midwest in 2014 when she was 11. While she speaks her father's mother tongue, Baoulé (a language widely spoken in her native Ivory Coast), Miriam's younger siblings struggle with it. Miriam noted that Baoulé is an oral language. English (learned during the family's time in Anglophone Ghana) is also spoken in the home. Miriam also speaks French and is currently taking French lessons to improve on her writing skills and "to be able to communicate with family back home in Ivory Coast."

Miriam self-identifies, thus, "I'm Ivorian; I was born in Ivory Coast. I grew up in Ghana, so, I'm Ghanaian, but not really Ghanaian. So, I identify myself as African." Outside school, Miriam plays piano, makes art and craft, and sings at her local church. She plans to go to college after high school to become a pediatrician.

When she arrived in the United States, Miriam was referred to an English Language Learning (*ELL*) program and was placed in ELL

Level 2. She soon realized that "the" English she learned in Ghana was not the same as what she calls "American English":

> At times, I struggled to pronounce certain words correctly. People told me that I have an accent. I don't hear accents in people, I hear everyone the same. Communication was good, but sometimes finding the right word to put in a sentence was a struggle.
>
> I pronounced some words really funny, kids made fun of me . . . English was very different. When at home I speak different English than when at school.

Miriam has fond memories and positive things to say about her experience at the ELL program:

> It was actually fun to meet other people like me, people from different backgrounds. I was able to see how they understand English and how I understand it. We are all learning, all with different strengths [and] experiences. We all just respected each other and were eager to learn from one another.

She also noted that ELL was good because "the teacher focused on us, like all the attention. If one child had a problem, the teacher talked to and guided that child until they understood it." Miriam liked the social aspect of her ELL experience as well:

> We were from different cultural and racial backgrounds, and it was a class you're always happy to go into because there are different people to meet. Sometimes you haven't talked to this person and when you go like, I have talked to this person today. It's really comforting. It's like you're home, but just with different people around you.

Asked whether she had similar experience at her high school, Miriam stated,

> I'll say kind of, but the ELL was more fun to be around people. In my normal classes, it was like a class, YES! I had friends,

> I liked the teacher, I understand what is being taught. But in ELL, I was going there to talk to the teacher personally, or like open up [about] my culture, my background. In normal class you go there to learn that specific subject. In ELL classrooms, you're learning English and are bringing your background into it.

The importance Miriam lays on bringing her background to learning is very significant. Miriam continued to recount her experiences at the ELL classrooms and the general classrooms:

> It is easier to make friends at ELL. We were encouraged to speak freely and to learn from each other. We were all there to learn and everyone's story was respected and appreciated. Everyone was friendly and seemed happy. It was a comfort zone for me. It was just wonderful to be there. I felt like I was more open in ELL class to show myself.

During a follow-up conversation, Miriam was asked why she was "more open in ELL classes" than at her high school. She responded,

> For instance, like in math classroom, the teacher wants you to stay on topic. I cannot talk about my background. You do that when you're out of class. But when you're in ELL class, you're more open. For instance, you have a presentation about where you come from, but in a math class, you wouldn't have a problem like that, probably in math you talk about how you solved this problem.

Having moved to Anglophone Ghana from her Francophone home country of Ivory Coast when she was 2 years old, Miriam spoke of drawing on her linguistic capital to maintain ties with her roots. She is in touch with friends and relatives in Ghana and Ivory Coast, especially through texting and Facebook, although she noted "we don't get into deeper conversation" because she doesn't know them. Miriam noted,

> I have no family in Ghana, but I have close people there. In Ivory Coast, I don't know anybody. But my parents kept in

> touch with family and friends. When people are talking about their extended family, I feel jealous because I don't know mine. I'm like, when am I going to meet my own family?

Miriam uses her parent's languages Baoulé and French to communicate with relatives in Ivory Coast, and Ghanaian English—"but not the proper [American] English"—with friends from Ghana. Miriam contrasted the two Englishes: "I would say, for example, 'Me I go go meet mama today.' But when I speak with someone face-to-face at school, I speak proper English." Asked why she changes her speaking style, Miriam stated,

> When I'm around my American friends, I speak proper English, otherwise, they will not understand what I'm saying. So, when I see friends from Africa, it's really hard to speak proper English. I speak the way we used to speak. It just happens naturally.

Miriam also described her language use at home with family members:

> When speaking with my mom, I mix French, Baoulé, and English words. When speaking with my younger siblings, we use only English. When I don't know a word, I use a different language. So, it's just a mixture of languages altogether.

At school, Miriam has a friend she speaks French with. As she pointed out, "Everybody speaks English at school, so if you want to say something private, you use French. Other than that, I'm yet to meet anyone at school who speaks a language same as me." Miriam spoke to her desire to learn more languages:

> I'm a very cultural person. I have a desire to learn new things about other people, their cultures and languages. For instance, one of my friends is from Mexico. I want to learn Spanish. Always yearning to learn more is my kind of passion. Maybe in my senior year of high school I'll pick another language to learn.

When probed further regarding being "a cultural person," Miriam explained,

> It does not mean I can learn all about countries in a day, but I'm open to everything, to what others want to teach me about their culture. I'm willing to accept and understand.

Miriam asserted that her ability to speak many languages makes her feel "special and unique." As she put it, "I'm happy whenever someone . . . asks me, 'How many languages do you speak?' because it gives me the opportunity share my culture and languages." She considered it unfortunate that many of her American friends "have grandparents who came to the U.S. from elsewhere but they let that language slide, and, then, they speak English only. I wish that more of them were open to [learning] other languages."

Miriam's description of her culture and the languages she speaks echoes what Moll, Amanti, Neff, and Gonzalez (1992) call "funds of knowledge" (p. 132) and Yosso (2005) describes as "cultural wealth" (p. 30). Miriam draws on these to navigate her new home-world:

> Mostly in my studies we have done a lot of class presentations about ourselves, where we come from, and just showing them pictures of what we do. Because of what people think of Africa as a sad miserable place, I'm like, that is not what Africa is. There are languages, cultures [and] people who enjoy staying there. I'm happy to share that Africa has more than just sadness, and there is more. So just showing that, YES, I've accomplished something by teaching someone [about] where I'm from and what I know.

Miriam also has some words of advice for young people who may be coming to the United States from Africa: "Focus on ELL class. Benefit from people around you. Be open to people, opening up more to different languages you will encounter is always nice. And, don't take anything for granted."

Narrative account of Haniah

Haniah is 14, in Grade 9, and the oldest of two siblings from Burkina Faso. Upon arrival in the Midwest 4 years ago, she spoke her parents' mother tongues (Bwamu and Dyula) and French and had "a basic understanding of English." Haniah attended an ELL program during her first 2 years in the United States. She describes her experience at ELL as "very exciting," adding that "meeting new people and learning new things is cool." Despite ELL being exciting, Haniah also described herself as quiet and shy:

> I didn't understand English well. Being around other students who were better in English, I just mostly wanted to listen to them to see how they spoke, so I could learn new words from them, and also speak like them. I really wanted to learn English really quickly so I could express myself. I also noticed that I had difficulties and so most of the time I would stay quiet [and] listen to how people express themselves, and how they came forward and I would copy it and practice at home. I learned mostly by listening and observing.

When probed further about what her experiences in ELL, Haniah said,

> I really liked my teacher. She was very open-minded and had an interest in us and our stories. She used a lot of pictures, which I loved because I learn best when illustrations are used. The teacher would ask me if I understood. And when I did not understand she'd come to me and help me understand. In other classes, teachers would just teach normally, if I didn't understand, they'd ask me to use Google Translate. Some did try, but when it got hard, they would tell me to use Google Translate. I also liked my classmates. We developed a way of understanding each other. We would sometimes use Google Translate or we could draw, or make signs. We also used expressions and body language to communicate with each other. I felt safe and comfortable in ELL class. My teacher and classmates understood me and I understood them. We all knew how hard it is sometimes to understand people and also express ourselves.

Haniah described how she is always happy to meet other French speakers. "I speak French at home [and] there are some students who speak French in school. It brings warmth to see somebody else that speaks the same language as you. And when I see them I'm really happy. It is exciting." She admits as well that working on her English has been challenging at times. Her language errors are met with smiles or laughter from peers and others correct her. Haniah noted,

> Initially, such reactions made me feel a little bit hurt. But now, I can learn from my mistakes. Today, when I make mistakes, I brush it off. When my friends catch that, I say "Thank you, that's very helpful."

Haniah juxtaposes the challenges of learning English with her strengths in mathematics:

> Even when I was struggling with language, I would get really good grades in math and others were like, you're very smart. I feel happy and proud when that happens. It brings a new level of respect.

Addressing the issue of culture in the classroom, Haniah noted,

> In my culture, you do not raise your voice or keep eye contact when speaking with older people. You can have eye contacts, yes, but if you have too much eye contact with an older person it may be seen as being aggressive [or] disrespectful. So, when I came [to the U.S.], I had a problem with that, because I didn't want to be disrespectful. The teachers told me that I should look in the eye because it is very important. If you don't, it is like suspicious, or you're lying or feeling ashamed. I tried to do it but I struggled a lot. I set a goal; I was [going] to maintain eye contact for a few seconds, then look elsewhere.

Haniah keeps in touch with family and friends in Burkina Faso. She uses French mostly with a few English words. She noted those conversations provide space for her to practice French:

> Sometimes we switch back and forth using English and French words. The codeswitching happens even at my house. I do speak mostly English when talking to my younger brother because he is surrounded by English everywhere. I use a lot of codeswitching with my parents.

Haniah described her experiences with low expectations and expressed how she takes pride in her work:

> I love surprising them. There was one time when I said a complete sentence, yet they knew I was in ELL. A few students said, "Wow! You're using big words." Instead of saying "smart," I would say, "intelligent." They be like, oh my goodness! It is always fun to see their reaction because they have such a low expectation of ELL students. Some students think that just because a classmate may not have a good understanding of the language they cannot be able to make a complete sentence.

Continuing to describe experiences of low expectations, Haniah noted that she resisted that perception:

> At first, I had mixed feelings. I felt a little sad that they had low expectations of us. I know that everyone is smart. I think you just need to use your brain and resources. But then when I surprised them by proving that I am smart, they see me and know that she knows how to do it. She knows how to express herself. That makes me feel happy. And then the next person that will come, they will not have such low expectations. I'm like, "You are going to have better time than I had because I have showed them something different." And that makes me happy for the next person, because they will have a better experience than I had.

Haniah reiterated, "Students [who are] learning English are intelligent. The language barrier doesn't mean we are not smart. The language is the only thing that is dragging us down." She described a time when she answered a question using a "wrong" language:

> I had a long day. During the last period, the English teacher asked me a question and I started speaking in French. Everyone just paused and they were like, "We don't understand what you just said." I had to restart and say the same thing in English. Some people didn't believe that I spoke French. I don't know why? So, when I spoke French they were like, are you from France, you're from Canada? They think that because I'm from Africa, I only speak African languages. Some students were confused, some of them were smiling, laughing, it was just a bunch of emotions. It felt awkward. The teacher was surprised too and asked if I was ok. Maybe I was frustrated. She understands that students feel frustrated sometimes. It felt good that someone cared. She is a great teacher.

Haniah identified another reason that motivated her to improve her English language skills: the desire to articulately express herself. She described a situation at the school cafeteria:

> We all sat at a table with six chairs. So, six people go through the door to get lunch, the rest wait; then six other people go. So, I went with other five girls, took lunch and came back and someone had taken my chair. They knew I was sitting there. And they knew I was an ELL. And a girl who was Black and tall like me said to her friend, "It's OK. You can sit down. She doesn't even speak English." Now, I'm standing there. I can understand them but I cannot express myself fully. All I had was a bunch of words not being able to form a complete sentence that would be understandable to others. And so, I stand there [in] silence and just watched. It hurt me deeply because she is Black like me. You don't know what it's like to learn a new language, or come to a completely new environment, a new country, new house, new school, make new friends, have good grades, understand people! We were in the same class. Later, at a class presentation, she said that she doesn't speak French although she has French heritage. That surprised me. I was like, "Are you not proud of your family roots? Do you feel ashamed that you didn't learn the language? Are you mad

> because I'm learning more languages?" The more questions I asked myself the more I got hurt. I felt really disappointed.

Haniah's love for books and reading motivated her to learn English too. When she arrived in the United States, shortage of books in French presented her with a challenge and an opportunity:

> So there are all these books, but I can't read them. To read a French book, I had to go online and pay for them. And sometimes the book title was in French but the content was in English. That gave me the motivation to learn English as fast I could.

Haniah self-identifies as African and Burkinabé. She noted, "It's really great being an African girl in America. There are some ups and downs. There are some hard times. All you have to do is learn from your mistakes and educate those who don't know." We asked Haniah to explain what the fun part or tough part of being an African was. She responded,

> I like to be different. So, when I come in a room where everyone is American, I'd say, "Hi, I'm African." I like that because I stand out, because then I'm not like everyone else. I have my own culture. It's fun because I grew up around that, it makes me who I am today. Some of the experiences I learned in Africa build me; some I've learned here build me too. On both sides, I learned something. But most of the time it was from home. Some tough parts will be people who are intolerant to those who are different. Some people have a specific mindset or stereotype towards you. And for you to flip it over or change it, you have to work twice as hard. When they see you, they don't think, oh, she is smart or she is a hard worker. They just have another mindset. It's different for everyone.

When probed further about what she meant by feeling the need to prove herself, Haniah said,

> There are some teachers who see me and say, "I hope she is not a bad student," or "I hope she doesn't create drama."

> Because some of the students we had in school liked to create drama. And sometimes because of those girls, when I come, they have a mindset, or like a specific stereotype that they have created themselves or based on media, whichever it is about people of my race or ELL student. So, when you come, you can't do some of the things they do. You have to prove yourself. You have to work really hard, you have to keep your grades up. I feel like Black girls sometimes have to prove themselves more. Maybe girls of other races do too.

Haniah concluded by saying that, as time goes by, she does not see herself as an outsider as much as she used to. As she put it, "After a while, they start getting used to you. It's not surprising anymore. They know that you're smart. Now I do feel more comfortable, compared to earlier."

Results

Data analysis yielded four themes resonating across both participant narratives: CCW in multilingual classrooms; multilingual competencies and communication; language, culture, and identity; and stereotypes and resistant capital.

CCW in Multilingual Classrooms

For participants, CCW manifested in stories of lived experiences in ELL classrooms. More than just a place to learn English, for Miriam, ELL classroom also involved making friends, finding her voice, describing her own background and listening to similar narratives of hope, and dreams from others. It was a space where otherwise invisible backgrounds were acknowledged.

Participants contrasted their ELL experiences to general classrooms: ELL prioritized the individual student while general classrooms bracketed out the individual and emphasized content:

> When you're in ELL class, you are more open. For instance, you have a presentation about where you come from, but in a

> math class, you wouldn't have a problem like that. Probably in math, you talk about how you solved this problem. (Miriam)

> Content in ELL class was linked to student experiences. Teachers "would break [content] down for us, like this is what you need to understand. This is how you can relate it to your life, [and] this is where you can put your own languages/experiences" (Miriam).

The participants regarded ELL classes as a safe haven that was well-suited to their particular strengths and needs. ELL lessons sparked their interests and made learning authentic, relevant, and personally meaningful. Both also described their ELL teachers as caring and respectful of their individual strengths, differences, and uniqueness: suggesting that ELL classrooms enabled a supportive environment where educators actively appreciated, sought out, and explored the different forms of capital that IRBHS students brought to the classroom. Participants' cultural and linguistic resources and aspirational capital were more present/alive and appreciated in ELL classrooms than in the general classrooms, where the content focus of the latter often framed such cultural and linguistic resources invisible.

Multilingual Communication Competencies

Participants described their use of different communicative repertoires across varying contexts and with different audience. They used various forms of English in context-sensitive ways (with schoolmates and teachers, friends and relatives in Africa, and/or French speakers at school). Both used translanguaging especially with family and friends.

The navigational capital these multilingual strategies afford can be applicable in different contexts. Miriam, for instance, highlighted the differences between Ghanaian and American English. Here, the resource of a "foreign" English not only rendered the use of American English more complex but also afforded the communicative potential of switching between Ghanaian English with African friends and "proper English" with American friends. This difference in English was intra-familial as well: "When speaking with [my] siblings, it's

only English because [they] do not speak Baoulé very well" (Miriam). In this case, the siblings' English comprises a mix of their greater exposure to American English and Ghanaian English.

Haniah also contrasted language use in and out of school. Meeting someone who speaks her language "brings [her] warmth," and she keeps in contact with West African friends using French. Trading language lessons (French and English) online with friends, translanguaging at home with her parents, and seeking to maintain her French fluency by reading French books, Haniah viewed multilingual competency as a valuable trait.

While translanguaging operationalizes Haniah's linguistic and navigational capital across multiple contexts, her valorization of multilingual competency was baffled by her classmate who claimed French heritage but lacked ability to speak French. Haniah wonders, "Are you not proud of your family roots? Do you feel ashamed that you didn't learn the language?" These questions show how closely language, culture, and identity can be intertwined.

These nuances emphasize the functionally multilingual elements of world Englishes. For Miriam, this manifested as accent: "People told me that I have an accent. I don't hear accents in people, I hear everyone the same." Conceptualizing languages as communicative only, Miriam, nonetheless, appreciated her accented English and viewed her several languages as different means for navigating across spaces and contexts. In this way, French and Ghanaian English could also be used to keep some communications unintelligible to others nearby.

Language, Culture, and Identity

Besides using language and cultural resources to navigate contexts and spaces, the participants viewed multilingual resources as a means for maintaining friendships and family relations/connections locally and in Africa. Miriam, who was a refugee in Ghana from the age of 2 years, described her desire to keep her languages and cultures with a goal of reconnecting with her roots, especially relatives in the Ivory Coast that she had never met or had only later come to know through social networking. Language in this case provides the literal means for reconnecting to and bonding with the culture and identity of family members in Ivory Coast, albeit in indirect ways. For Haniah, reading

French books and maintaining contact with Francophone friends in Burkina Faso is also a way to support a French part of her identity under pressure to otherwise assimilate into U.S. culture.

More immediately, participants viewed their languages and cultural resources as markers of their unique selves, recognized most visibly in their ELL classrooms. For example, one of the things Miriam liked about the ELL classroom was the opportunity to give a presentation about herself, her country of origin, and its cultures. This enabled her to take a deep look at who she was and was becoming as an IRBHS student in a foreign land. For Haniah, while ELL classes were exciting, she felt self-conscious about her only-emergent English skills and preferred to sit quietly, listening and learning. In particular, she highlighted the teacher's kindness, helpfulness, understanding, and use of illustrations to teach—all of which created a sense of recognition or acknowledgment of Haniah's situation by the teacher.

Besides this recognition of self, participants described their own active search and appreciation for the cultures and languages of others. Miriam self-identified as "a very cultural person," who makes a point to "ask [other IRBHS students] to teach me some of their words." For Haniah, French is the language she not only reverts to in class when tired or distracted, but also "when I share exciting news. So, it is part of me." About her parents' languages (Dyula and Bwamu), which she mentioned that she was slowly losing, Haniah said, "It just brings really happy memories with grandma." Here again is shown the deep connection with culture and identity linked to language. Consequently, the complex multilingual and lived multicultural backgrounds of both participants made self-identification complex.

Both participants articulated their identities based on their languages, culture, country, and continent of origin. While they took pride in their African heritage, the designation African itself stands in much like the misnomer "American" for people in the United States ("America," properly speaking, is the whole of the western hemisphere, not just the United States). If multicultural immigrants from around the world have sought to forge a local identity in the United States under the rubric of "American," here the vicissitudes of immigration (and in Miriam's case, an earlier remove from the Ivory Coast to Ghana) experienced by the study participants can similarly be compassed by an identity as "African." Like "American," "African" can offer a coherent

and integrated self of identity that links together an otherwise disparate collection of ethnic/linguistic heritage and multiple countries of origin.

Stereotypes and Participants' Resistant Capital

Participants highlighted their resistant capital against perceptions and experiences of stereotypes—including low academic expectations (and consequent surprise at high achievements), a perceived lack of intelligence (due to variant English language), low behavioral expectations (Black girls cause drama), and perceptions of their continent of origin as backward—to succeed in their classroom settings. For instance, Miriam used her multilingual competency as resistant capital against perceived ELL deficit status:

> I would get irritated when asked, "Where do you come from?" or "How many languages do you speak?" But still I'm happy to be asked that because I'm able to share my culture and languages.

During class presentations, Miriam could use her multilingual resources as resistant capital against negative perceptions of ELL students and Africa: "People think of Africa as a miserable place. I'm like, this is not what Africa is." Similarly, Haniah reported the surprise of peers when using big or uncommon words—for instance, saying "intelligent" rather than "smart" in a sentence— to resist deficit perceptions as an African or ELL student. In her attempt to disrupt the negative stereotypes, Haniah described the pressure she felt to remain continually vigilant and to work harder in school: "You have to work twice as hard." However, she has also learned how to gracefully receive constructive criticisms ("Today, when I make mistakes, I brush it off. When my friends catch that, I say 'Thank you, that's very helpful.'"). This links expressly to Haniah's family experience in which humility, hard work, and resilience are considered important. As she noted, "When we left home for the United States, we knew that while we were coming to a land of opportunity, we would have to work hard to succeed in life."

In general, participants utilized resistant capital in three main ways: (a) teaching others, and correcting inaccurate stereotypes, about who they were (African, ELL students) and where they were from, (b) working hard in school, and (c) not "causing drama." Using resistant capital against stereotypes has at least two sides, that is, stereotyping by teachers and stereotyping by peers.

Both participants felt a need to "teach them" against the false preconceptions and hoped that their efforts would make things easier for future IRBHS students from Africa. Furthermore, Haniah regarded a speedy mastery of English language as a way to build up resistant capital. While an absence of French-language books accelerated this desire, Haniah's experience in the cafeteria was more decisive: understanding her peer's statement to another ("It's OK. You can sit down. She doesn't even speak English") while being unable to articulate her defense, made Haniah more determined to master English, a necessary tool expression in her context.

As already stated, resistant capital includes skills and cultural practices that challenge inequality and promote social justice. To this end, Haniah's otherwise effective practice of sitting silently in class and listening attentively read as incomprehension. Although unable to articulate her views in English, Haniah does not confront a bully at the cafeteria with an outburst of French, a language she can use when excited. Rather, there is a tone of dismay not just that she was hurt deeply by the dismissal but specifically by someone she perceived as similar, as "tall and Black like me." While the surprise of this alone might well paralyze action, an injunction to not "cause drama" may be at play as well. To the extent that any confrontation could be deemed causing drama, the resistant capital Haniah possessed for challenging an injustice like this did not have any space (or space for a recognition) of its legitimacy of practice. In any case, the experience motivated Haniah to learn English. Importantly, the motivation did not signal (and should not be misread as) a greater commitment to linguistic assimilation but, rather, indicated a will to gain more resistant capital for future use.

Discussion

This study employed narrative inquiry to unfold and understand lived experiences of two IRBHS students in the Midwest. The study investigated the affordances, challenges, and use of CCW by the study participants as guided by three research questions.

The first question asked, "How do immigrant- and refugee-background high school students perceive treatment of their CCW in their daily lives as they navigate new contexts in the U.S.?" From the findings, participants reported overall that their CCW was more appreciated in multilingual (ELL) classrooms than general classrooms. This finding corroborates Isik-Ercan (2014), which reported that multilingual children have more difficulties in monolingual/monocultural classrooms and that their parents would prefer their children have access to schools with a diverse student body. Study participant experiences point to the possibility that general classroom teachers have fewer resources to help them address some of the challenges faced by IRBHS students. This echoes the work by Somé-Guiébré (2016), which observed that mainstream teachers may not have the means to interact effectively with African multilingual learners, to offer comprehensible input or to provide more than merely generic feedback.

Both participants reported multiple ways that they drew upon their experiences and funds of knowledge to leverage linguistic and navigational capital across multiple contexts. In general, the participants reported far more experiences of feeling present and visible in multilingual classrooms, where they were also able to utilize resistant capital to correct misperceptions about an ELL student, Africa, Africans, and their African self-identification. This echoes multiple studies (cf., He et al., 2017; Kiramba, 2017a; Malsbary, 2014) that emphasize the importance of affording space in classrooms for the presentation and recognition of students' cultural and linguistic capital.

The second question asked, "How do IRBHS students view themselves and their cultural and linguistic competencies?" Identifying as "African," the use of this term—like the use of "American" in U.S. contexts—helped integrate the participants' disparate and varied multicultural, multilingual background experiences both as positive self-identifications and as navigational and resistant capital against stereotyping by teachers and peers (Yosso, 2005). The participants spoke, with pride, about their cultures and their ability to speak

multiple languages. Miriam described herself as "a very cultural person" and noted that being able to speak many languages makes her "feel special and unique." Similarly, Haniah asserted that "it is really great to be an African girl in America." She stated that she enjoys speaking different languages and that "It brings warmth to see somebody else that speaks the same language as you." The participants did not downplay their identity (Watson & Knight-Manuel, 2017) with Haniah talking about her Burkina Faso heritage and Miriam declaring that "I'm Ivorian. I'm also Ghanaian, but not really Ghanaian." Rather, in Carter's (2007) words, the participants were "multicultural navigators" who not only knew their resources and utilized them but also recognized and appreciated peers' multiple forms of capital as well.

In general, despite experiencing varying degrees and frequencies of stigmatization, stereotyping, and unequal treatment, the participants often took these more as moments for resistant capital than for self-doubt about their identity (Zoch, Alarcón, Bettez, & Hardin, 2018). The participants leveraged their navigational and resistant capital through translanguaging to confront, challenge, or simply negotiate their way through situations. They viewed their multilingual competencies as part of their uniqueness and identity. This echoes the notion that translanguaging affords a voice for identities (Kiramba, 2017b) and connections to family abroad in otherwise marginalized positions (S. Kim, 2018; Watson & Knight-Manuel, 2017): for example, Haniah's use of French, English, and Baoulé as a means for maintaining identity connections with real and imagined communities abroad (He et al., 2017).

The third question asked, "What forms of cultural wealth do such students draw from in their daily lives as they negotiate new spaces in and out of school?" A strategy employed by one participant involving aspirational and resistant capital was effective in disrupting stereotypes. Having experienced negative comments about her accent and variant pronunciation of English words, Miriam countered not only by asserting that she was multilingual rather than monolingual but also by inquiring about the multilinguality of the one addressing her: "Yes, I'm not from here, you're right. And I can speak these languages. Can you please tell me, how many languages you speak?" This resonates with strategies similarly described by Ghong et al. (2007).

Consistent with findings that stereotypes about Africa can present a challenge to children of African descent in U.S. classrooms

(Covington-Ward, 2017; Ndemanu & Jordan, 2018), both participants reported sometimes using public opportunities to speak as teaching moments to correct misconceptions about Africa, Africans, and their own self-identification and intellectual capacities as African. More often, these were addressed to peers than teachers.

With teachers, perceived low performance expectations were an issue for participants. Although peers could be surprised by unexpectedly competent linguistic performances, general classroom teachers often evinced misgivings in the participants that they were not expected to behave or perform well. In particular, participants experienced confusion around teachers' implied assumption that "Black girls cause drama." In response, the participants deployed their resistant capital by performing well on schoolwork and behaviorally distinguishing themselves in classrooms.

Some forms of resistant capital employed by the participants were aimed at benefiting future IRBHS students. The participants challenged negative stereotypes and misperceptions so that future students from Africa might have an easier time than they had. As Haniah aptly pointed out, "that makes me happy for the next person, because they will have a better experience than I had." While Yosso (2005) links resistant capital to this type of "passing on to future generations," these gestures also leveraged the participants' aspirational capital to do well in school.

Conclusion and Implications

Recognizing that "monolingualism is the illiteracy of the twenty-first century" (Roberts, Leite, & Wade, 2018, p. 116), the need for global, multilingual, and multicultural competence in young people makes these skills not only a marker of a global citizenry but also a national economic necessity (Malsbary, 2014). As such, all teachers are called upon to embrace methodologies that serve multilingual learners and decouple perceptions of lesser ability in nonlocally fluent learners. More broadly, we suggest that multilingual approaches to K-12 pedagogy that acknowledge the different forms of capital possessed by IRBHS students may achieve better educational outcomes for all students.

Why? Because to focus on, recognize, and draw upon student strengths and the various forms of capital they possess represent an empirically effective way to support and enable academic excellence and better educational outcomes in general (Kiramba, 2017a). In the case of this study's IRBHS students, moreover, their educational experiences in the United States also drew upon and elicited a global imagination of self and identity well-suited to the socioeconomic demands of the 21st century world scene. These experiences point to a continentally grounded identity and a negotiated space of learning where, as Miriam notes, "we were all there to learn and everyone's story was respected." As such, the call by Ndemanu and Jordan (2018) for educators to deepen their authentic knowledge of students' languages and cultures serves to debunk and challenge misconceptions and stereotypes about IRBHS students. Not to treat students of any background as "baggage to be brought along or left behind" (Orellana, 2016, p. 5) opens up the possibility for capitalizing upon CCW by utilizing students' cultural and linguistic frames of reference.

The findings in this study carry a number of implications for educators. First, the study highlights the need for educators to acknowledge their biases and challenge deficit perceptions they may hold about students. Educators need to challenge the societal set precedent for "being intelligent" and unpack stereotypical generalizations. All educators have a role to bridge the gap between newcomer students and the mainstream students by attempting to incorporate students' multiplicity of histories and experiences in ways that can benefit the whole classroom. Failure to see learners through the lenses of CCW may lead to misjudgments about student abilities, low expectations of students, and may result in placement in lower initial grades or special education classes. Second, focusing on students' strengths and different forms of capital is an effective way to support IRBHS and enable them to excel. This study has demonstrated that there are several assets that IRBHS students bring to school that could be leveraged in the classroom. Students' translingual and multilingual competence, multicultural navigating skills, abilities to utilize resistance capital, form complex skills needed in the 21st century, that should be centered rather than put on the periphery.

Midwestern schools and teacher training programs have a duty to prepare teachers for the diverse populations represented in the

classroom today, through inclusion of culturally relevant pedagogy, study abroad programs for creating awareness, and so on, to prepare globally competent educators.

Limitations

The findings presented in this study are not meant to be representative of all IRBHS experiences in the United States. The participant experiences and ways in which they negotiated various forms of capital are not necessarily universal among all IRBHS students. However, their stories serve as a reminder that all students bring with them different forms of capital that can be leveraged in school settings. This study was conducted outside the classroom; hence, its findings are limited to the participants' experiences and perceptions of occurrences within and outside the classroom and what these meant to them. But, as Milner (2012) suggested, addressing school challenges is "multidimensional and complex" (p. xvii). We believe that this study enhances our knowledge in addressing educational issues that arise from the changing demographics in our schools today.

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